

A
LETTER

FROM A

H/6 London Minister

To the

Lord FLEETWOOD.



LONDON

Printed for T. V. 1659.

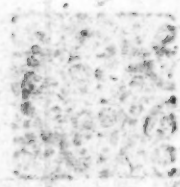
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London Minister

to the

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LONDON

Printed for T. D. 1672

A Letter to the Lord Fleetwood.

My Lord,

TO you I make bold to addresse these few lines; 1. In compliance with that invitation of yours to us, to acquaint you with our dis-satisfactions. 2. To exonerate my own conscience, in not suffering sinne to rest upon my brother. 3. Because you have the reputation (and I am perswaded justly) of a person truly fearing God, whose errors therefore I cannot judge incurable: However I shall contribute my poor endeavours to your conviction and satisfaction. 4. Because upon you principally the sinne lies, and under God the remedy is much in your hands. You may easily imagine your self an incompetent Judge in your own cause, there being even in good men too great a pronenesse to abet those actions which once they have been engaged in. Mens interests have a mighty power in the corruption of the judgement, *Perit judicium, cum res transit in affectum*. But I hope by the present straits, divisions and confusions we are in, God hath awakened you to a more impartial view of your actions, and opened your ear to Discipline.

My Lord, 1. If that be true, *That when a mans wayes please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him*; it may at the least afford you cause to suspect, that your wayes are displeasing to God, whereby you have made thousands of your friends to be at enmity to you.

2. It is too too evident that these practices of yours carry a manifest contrariety to the spirit, rule and practice of the Apostles and ancient Christians, who alwayes both pressed upon others, and practised themselves subjection to those Civil Authorities under which God set them, and never durst entertain a thought of pulling them down, no not although their intentions had been unquestionably good, and their necessity was evidently great, and sometimes the providence of God fairly invited them; yet they alwayes chose rather to suffer under them, then, being but private persons, sinfully to subvert them.

3. If your practices be justifiable, it may very well be doubted, whether there be any such sin in the world, as Rebellion, Sedition, despising of Dignities, and the like? Forasmuch as there hardly is at this day in the world, and very feldome hath been in any age, more wise and religious Magistrates, than those Parliaments which have been the objects of your oppositions.

4. It may not a little stumble you, to consider what general offence your proceedings have given to the world, and particularly to this whole Nation. And if the offending of one little one be so heinous a crime, it must needs heighten the sinne, and cause you to question your actions, if you consider, that none are more grievously offended at you, then the wisest and best men in the Nation, there being few or none such in the Nation (whose interests and concerns may not be suspected to balance their judgements) who are not mourning in secret for those abominations.

5. It is most evident and plain (what ever may be falsely suggested to you to the contrary) that you have turned against you the most fervent prayers of many thousands of Gods elect, who cry day and night unto him for the vindication of his Name, and declaration of himself against all unrighteous persons and actions.

6. Your actions are manifestly repugnant unto all the rules of Righteousnesse Divine and Humane. If Christ himself would not, and durst not meddle in the office of a Judge about private inheritances, because not legally called thereunto, what shall we think of you, who have taken this honour to your selves, to make your selves Judges, the Supream Judges of three Nations, making even Parliaments (hitherto reputed the highest Judicatories of the Nation) give place to your private sentiments, and stand or fall at your Tribunals? Nor must you think it without sinne, that you have trampled upon the Civil Laws and Rights of the Nation, by which alone *Morum* and *Thum* are distinguished, and propriety secured, and by which alone those unrighteous actions are detected and discovered, which by Scripture are condemned.

7. What ever you who are concerned may think, and others, whose interests are interwoven in the same Cause, there are but few wise and serious Christians, who do not judge Necessity, good Intentions and Providences altogether incompetent to warrant mens transgressions of known rules, there being no action so wicked to which

which these fig-leaves may not easily be preterred. To which may be added, That as your necessities have been very much of your own making, so there are many, and those as wise men, as any that have cooperated with you, that are altogether unsatisfied, as to the supposed necessity of your proceedings. And for your intentions, God only knows them; and however we have a sure Rule, *To do no evil that good may come of it.* And for providence, I think its voice speaks as loud against you, as it hath sometimes seemed to speak for you.

My Lord, I think all these put together, may a little make you to suspect your selves guilty; and O that God wou'd open your eyes, and put it into your hearts to *repent with a repentance, no more to be repented of; to remember from whence you are fallen, and to do your first works;* which the rather you have cause to do, because your sins are cloathed with particular aggravations. *My Lord*, I beseech you believe it, I write it with a bleeding heart, *Religion hath received its sorest wounds in the house of its friends.* That those things should be done by men highly professing godlinesse, and that under the very pretence and profession of godlinesse, and they too tied up by so many and solemn engagements; *O tell it not in Gath, &c.* It had been better for some, that they had never been born (though for you I am perswaded better things, and that God will give you repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.) O my Lord, This is that which makes us weep in secret, which makes us sigh to the breaking of our loins, and we cannot cease to complain of it to God daily. Be not angry if I say, By you the name of God is blasphemed among the *Heathen*, and Religion really believed to be but a polittick device and imposture to carry on designs by. *My Lord*, by those actions of yours it is, That *Protestants* abroad are judged, censured, reproached and threatned (as a people dangerous to Civil Authority, and despisers of Dignities) *Protestants* at home divided, as highly as can be (which hath alwayes been the wish, design and endeavour of our most cunning and cruel adversaries) and exasperated one against another. You have made *England* naked to its shame before our enemies; you have uncover'd your Mothers nakedness; and exposed her to the danger of foreign invasions, and prepared the people of the Nation for a compliance with the very worst of their and our enemies. And, which is not the least (though mentioned last) you have done unspeakable wrong to all succeeding ages, in afford-

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ing such Presidents, as will warrant and justify all imaginable tyrannies, oppressions, invasions of liberties, trampling upon Parliaments, and such other mischiefs, as will make posterity curse the day wherein their Parents were born, that had an hand in such actions.

If you now enquire what is the remedy in this dangerous posture, that needs no tedious nor scrupulous disquisition, it is so obvious, that he that runs may read; *vox populi* (which oft-times is *vox Dei*) will tell you: There is one Remedy, (without which all other things are but palliative cures and skinnings over of the wound while it festers inwardly, and which alone is sufficient and satisfactory) and that is a Parliament, which though it be not universally free, yet if it have as much freedom for elections as former Parliaments have had in the late Protector's daies, will give content to the generality of the sober and Parliamentary party in the Nation. My Lord, I hope you will pardon my plainnesse, The great grievance of the Nation, and burden upon the hearts and backs of the people, is the soveraignty of an Army: Nor will the spirits of English-men longer bear, that Parliaments should be empty titles without reall power, or (as the King once said of his own) that the Power and Priviledges of Parliaments should hang like *Mahomet's Tomb* by a Magnetick charm, between the strength and interest of an Army in an airy imagination of Authority. My Lord, The Priviledges of Parliament are, as to civil things, our life, and the length of our daies; and that solemn Covenant (which God remembers however men may forget) layes you under the highest obligation, that is possible, to maintain them, and having so notoriously violated them, you are the more ingaged to a restitution of them: Nor will it any way satisfie, but exasperate the spirits of people, to have Titular Parliaments, while the power shall remain in other hands; it matters not whether Army or Senate or any other Name; for people are too wise to be deceived with Names, so long as the thing is the same for Substance.

I know it will be said against this, that you see no security for Religion, or the Interests of Gods people; persecution will be brought in, and the cause you have fought for given up. But, my Lord, give me leave to mind you,

1. That a Parliament so constituted as before, will consist of Persons ingaged in the Parliament cause, who have Estates to loose as

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well as you, (and in as much danger as yours) who also are as wise to discern and prevent such danger as those that dissent from them.

2. It were happy for us, if Christians would resume their ancient Principles, and mind duty more, and security lesse. It is indeed a distrust of Gods Providence in the use of lawfull means, that hath engaged you (as others in such cases) to sinfull shifts, which yet you may observe, have been altogether insufficient to heal our maladies, and rather have increased and heightened them, and (which nothing else could have done) they have divided the sober godly Parliamentary Party among themselves, and thereby exposed all to ruine.

3. It is most evident (whatever is maliciously suggested or zealously surmised to the contrary) that there is in Presbyterians and many other sober persons, a reall love and tendernesse toward such as differ in lesser things; that Parliaments will consider the state of the Nation, and that *in turbidum statum*, they will be necessitated to a Toleration of divers things, and the allowing of a liberty to them, which otherwise had not been fit nor lawfull (it may be) to afford.

4. It is certain there must be a trust some where, and it is an hard case, that you will force all the people of the Nation to put their trust under your shadow, the influence whereof hitherto hath been very ungratefull to them, and deprive them of that experienced, approved, and generally desired way of Parliamentary authority, (by which, as such, *England* seldom or never received hurt.)

5. Although, if a suffering time comes, it is like Presbyterians as well as Congregationall men, will feel it; yet really, when I consider all things, I do without hesitancy conclude, that it is unspeakably more desirable by true Christians, (though not by self-seeking Politicians) that some, yea all religious men should suffer, rather then Religion should suffer, as it doth beyond expression by such irregular courses.

6. Lastly, Though it must be confessed there is some danger, and so is like to be however things go, (and most of all when we enter into untrodden paths, the ill consequences whereof, because not yet experienced, are by few discerned,) yet it is not difficult to conceive of such a disposall of affairs as may give the generality of the sober and good people of the Nation, competent and moral security. And we must never expect an infallible and Mathematical certainty in political things.

If

If it be further suggested to you that you have gone to far to re-
flect, I answer:

1. A retreat from sinne is the most honourable part of that War:
And the further men go on in sinfull waies, the more are they out of
the way.

2. When a man returneth from his iniquity, and doeth righteous-
ly, as God hath graciously promised to remember his iniquity no
more, so the prudence, conscience, and interest of men, will oblige
them to deal very tenderly in such cases, and rather to bury such
things in oblivion, then by too strict a scrutiny into them, to oc-
casion worle distempers.

3. Suppose the worst, which even jealousie itself can suggest, it
will be no comfort to any at the last day, nor credit here (it may
be nor security neither) rather to expose three flourishing King-
domes (upon whose welfare under God the wellbeing of all the
Protestant world depends) then to run a hazard for the personal
concernments of some few men.

My Lord, I have done, I crave your pardon for my tediousness
and boldness: I have delivered my mind with all freedom and
simplicity, as presuming that I write not to a worldly Politician, but
a sincere Christian, and as behooves a Minister and Christian to
write, and one who heartily wisheth your temporal and eternal
welfare.

M. P.

I Having by a good Providence met with this Letter of my
much respected Friend, a Minister in London, to the Lord
Fleetwood, which was delivered to him the 13th of this present
December 1659, and perceiving it to be of very great Use to all
persons, in reference to mens souls, and the Publique, I found
my self much pressed in spirit, out of love to both, to publish it.